

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 AID-05

OMB-01 EB-07 /069 W

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R 011616Z AUG 75

FM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2120

C O N F I D E N T I A L BUENOS AIRES 5187

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PGOV, PINT, AR

SUBJECT: FONMIN VIGNES' INFLUENCE ON THE WANE

SUMMARY. FONMIN VIGNES APPEARS TO HAVE LOST HIS POSITION OF CONFIDANT OF THE PRESIDENT, HAS BEEN EXCLUDED FROM MINI CABINET WHICH APPARENTLY IS BECOMING CENTER OF EXECUTIVE POWER (SEE SEPTTEL), AND IS UNDER INVESTIGATION BY THE LEGISLATURE FOR IMPROPER AND ILLEGAL ACTIVITIES. ALTHOUGH HE CANNOT YET BE COUNTED OUT, HIS INFLUENCE IS CLEARLY ON THE WANE AND HIS CONTINUANCE IN OFFICE INCREASINGLY QUESTIONABLE. END SUMMARY.

1. FOR A SHORT PERIOD FOLLOWING JULY 19 DEPARTURE OF LOPEZ REGA, FONMIN VIGNES APPEARED TO BE REPLACING HIM AS CONFIDANT AND RIGHT HAND MAN OF PRESIDENT PERON. HOWEVER, CONTINUING ATTACK AGAINST VESTIGES LOPEZRREGUISMO WITH WHOM VIGNES IDENTIFIED WEAKENED HIS POSITION. LARGE SECTOR OF PERONISTS, THE UCR AND PERHAPS MOST IMPORTANTLY THE MILITARY CINCS ARE PRESSING FOR HIS OUSTER.

2. VIGNES IS NO LONGER NOTED IN THE PRESS AS BEING CONTINUALLY BY MRS. PERON'S SIDE, A LA LOPEZ REGA, AS HE WAS IMMEDIATELY AFTER LOPEZ REGA'S DEPARTURE. EMBASSY CONTACTS ALSO ADVISE THAT HIS BRIEF TENURE AS CONFIDANT AND "FILTER" FOR THOSE WHO WISH TO SEE CONFIDENTIAL

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THE PRESIDENT HAS ENDED. THOSE CONTACTS REPORTED THAT

VIGNES HAD FORTIFIED HIS POSITION WITH MRS. PERON BY ASSURING HER THAT HE, AND HE ALONE, COULD OBTAIN MAJOR CREDITS FROM US BANKS. HIS FAILURE TO DELIVER HAS BECOME GLARINGLY APPARENT TO BOTH GENERAL PUBLIC AND HIS OPPONENTS.

3. ADDITIONALLY, VIGNES HAS BEEN EXCLUDED FROM "MINICABINET" HEADED BY INTERIOR MIN BENITEZ, WHICH APPEARS TO BE BECOMING CENTER OF EXECUTIVE POWER IN VIEW MRS. PERON'S CONTINUED INABILITY TO EXERCISE HER AUTHORITY. REPORTING ON A JULY 29 MEETING OF MINICABINET WITH DEFENSE AND MILITARY AUTHORITIES, TO WHICH VIGNES WAS NOT INVITED, LA OPINION COMMENTED THAT HIS ABSENCE WAS "CONSIDERED AS LOSS OF AUTHORITY". ARTICLE CONTINUED THAT HE WOULD PROBABLY BE REPLACED SOON.

4. COMPOUNDING VIGNES' SITUATION, CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES MEMBER JESUS PORTO HAS CALLED FOR LEGISLATIVE INVESTIGATION INTO VIGNES' PAST ACTIVITIES. VIGNES WAS SPECIFICALLY ACCUSED OF FRAUD, ILLEGAL ENRICHMENT AND OF HAVING BEEN DISMISSED TWICE, UNDER QUESTIONABLE CIRCUMSTANCES, FROM FOREIGN MINISTRY DURING EARLIER PERONIST GOVT. IN HEATED DIALOGUE, PUBLISHED JULY 29 PRESS, PORTO TOLD VIGNES HE HAD TO LEAVE OFFICE "BECAUSE YOU HAVE COMPLETED YOUR CYCLE AND BECAUSE YOU ARE A MERE CLERK OF LOPEZ REGA."

5. PUBLIC AND PRESS SPECULATION NOW IS NOT ON WHETHER OR NOT HE WILL LEAVE OFFICE BUT RATHER ON HIS SUCCESSOR. EXMIN DEFENSE AND NOW AMBASSADOR TO BRAZIL ROBLEDO WAS CONSIDERED FRONT RUNNER BUT HIS JULY 30 DEPARTURE FOR BRAZIL HAS LESSENED THAT SPECULATION. HOWEVER, DESPITE WIDESPREAD BELIEF THAT VIGNES' DAYS ARE NUMBERED, HE CANNOT YET BE COUNTED OUT. HIS FRIENDSHIP WITH MRS. PERON, AS WELL AS HIS PROVEN CAPABILITY AND POLITICAL ASTUTENESS, MAY SAVE HIM FOR SOME TIME YET. HILL

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: CABINET, POLITICAL SITUATION
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 01 AUG 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: GolinoFR
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975BUENOS05187
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750266-1153
From: BUENOS AIRES
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750887/aaaaczac.tel
Line Count: 97
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: GolinoFR
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 23 SEP 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <23 SEP 2003 by SmithRJ>; APPROVED <07 OCT 2003 by GolinoFR>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
06 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: FONMIN VIGNES' INFLUENCE ON THE WANE SUMMARY. FONMIN VIGNES APPEARS TO HAVE LOST HIS POSITION OF
TAGS: PFOR, PGOV, PINT, AR, (VIGNES, ALBERTO J)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 06 JUL 2006